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AUTHOR Hartstein, Ray
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ABSTRACT

Board members of community colleges need to carefully consider and actively support feasible programs for older people with a firm commitment to fiscal and programmatic decisions assuring lifelong learning opportunities and public service activities. Trustees must be aware of and understand problems and issues of older adults, secure data for decision-making, and implement policies and action programs. There are many benefits to be derived from implementing older people programs from the standpoint of the community college, the elderly themselves, and society in general. For the community college, an institution ideally suited to providing these services, such programs support college philosophy, open new markets, add a dimension to the educational enrichment of younger students, serve as a recruiting method, and contribute to good community relations. For the elderly themselves, special programs are their right as taxpayers, give them an outlet to contribute, aid emotional health, promote productivity and adjustment to life changes, provide outlets for leisure, and meet social needs. From the standpoint of the economy and society in general, these programs help accommodate congressional and state legislation, such as lifelong learning bills and age discrimination acts. All census data show that a total of 42 million Americans are over age 55 and the number is growing. (RC)

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BENEFITS A COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAN REALIZE

BY PROVIDING OLDER ADULT PROGRAMS

"A TRUSTEE'S VIEWPOINT"

By: Ray Hartstein, President
Illinois Community College
Trustees Association
Founding Chairman, Oakton
Community College
Morton Grove, IL

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES
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BENEFITS A COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAN REALIZE BY PROVIDING OLDER ADULT PROGRAMS

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I. HOW CAN BOARD MEMBERS SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR OLDER PEOPLE?

A. Introduction

As we define the role of the community college as to where we are and where we should be in the coming years, there are a number of questions and issues relative to the older persons that are worthy of consideration.

These are not issues that are tackled by trustees alone, but like all key issues of the institution, worked out cooperatively with our administration. Then, too, the consideration for the older person is in many ways no different from that of any other student.

Trustees who deal with policies, budgets and programs should constantly make sure that questions are asked about who gets served and how those services are rendered. But as an entrè, we can say that Board Members need to carefully consider and actively support feasible programs for older people with a firm committment for fiscal and programmatic decisions assuring lifelong opportunities and public service activities.

B. Awareness and Understanding By the Trustee

As a starting point, a Board Member must become aware of the problems and issues dealing with the older person and gain some understanding if he or she is to adequately make decisions in this area.

There are a number of ways this can be done:

1. Serve on city groups dedicated to the area; as, Chicago Planning Council on Aging and Rehabilitation;

2. Check legislation aimed at elderly persons at both federal and state levels and follow significant issues in the Federal Register;

3. Attend public hearings on such legislation; as, recent changes in the Older Americans Act and Social Security Act;

4. Visit organizations dealing with seniors; as, Niles Senior Center, Senior Adults Department of the Community Center, etc.;

5. Sit on boards of such organizations;

6. Attend meetings and conferences that focus on issues related to education for the middle-aged and older persons; as, "Creating Options and Opportunities for the Elderly" sponsored by the Metropolitan Chicago Coalition on Aging; "Community Care Services for the Elderly" sponsored by the Council for Jewish Elderly.

7. Become familiar with the work of the national and city organizations and agencies; as, "National Council on the Aging"; "American Association of Retired Persons"; "Geronotological Society"; "Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens and Handicapped (Chicago)", etc.;

8. Read books, literature and magazines for older persons; as, "50 Plus"; "Modern Maturity", etc.;

9. Check Community Colleges that have existing good programs for the elderly.

C. Secure Data for Decision Making

To make proper decisions in the area of older person's programs, a trustee must secure data as he or she would for any other board business, among which may include:

1. Secure Statistics: In addition to general national statistics, as, 20 million in the 55 to 65 age bracket and 23 million that are 65 and older, it would prove helpful to know the number of older citizens in the District or Market Area; as, the estimated 1.6 million persons over 55 years of age living in Northeastern Illinois.

2. Survey Needs: The college community should be surveyed as to what senior citizens need and would like. This could be done in many ways; as, (a) secure needs from

established organizations dealing with senior citizens; (b) have administrators or faculty make visits to senior citizen residences, centers and clubs; and (c) use the media - local newspaper, radio, TV - to secure suggestions from seniors.

3. Exchange Ideas with Other Trustees and Administrators: It would be well to constantly exchange ideas with counterparts at other community colleges as to the types of programs that are being conducted or would prove helpful to keep the older persons in the mainstream of society.

4. Check Present Programs on Campus: Board Members should review the basic purposes and functions of a comprehensive community college and check all present programs on campus that may have applicability to older folks including general studies, community education and public service activities.

D. Establish Action Program

After gaining an awareness and understanding of the problems and issues dealing with older persons and securing some basic data for decision making, the trustee can embark upon an "action program" to help implement the older person's programs similar to the suggested below.

However, in the process, a number of barriers that stand in the way of getting successful programs established for the elderly must be addressed; as, the myths and stereotypes regarding the aged, as well as the psychological factors affecting the seniors themselves; the campus environment; transportation - parking and accessibility; admissions and registration; insensitive faculty; inappropriate teaching; and nature of the courses.

1. Evaluate and Develop Policies: Evaluate present policies to be sure they cover aspects that meet the needs of all clients including the elderly and design and develop policies that community college administration trustees and state community college boards can adopt and that other agencies, business and government with the same goals, can endorse.

2. Foster Awareness of Elderly as a Resource: Board Members should foster an awareness of the rich resource that older Americans represent. This can be accomplished in daily business and social contacts in the community.

3. Seek and/or Determine Proper Financing: Board Members may look into a number of financial areas: (a) commit resources to older people programs by allocating funds for programs, salaries, etc.; (b) give special or reduced

tuition and fees or waive tuition costs.

The same consideration should be given to older citizens with limited financial resources or on a fixed income that are being affected by inflation and, therefore, a tuition and fee structure should be developed that they can afford.

(c) seek federal or state funding or seek out funds from foundations.

For example, originators of the Elderhostel Program, one nationwide, off-to-college movement for those over 60, secured funds from Kellogg Foundation, Atlantic Richfield Foundation and Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Some universities have received funding through Title I of the Higher Education Act.

State funding may be sought for programs catering primarily to older citizens as a supplement to the college for increased cost attributed to reduced tuition or other adaptations.

4. Provide Proper Physical Environment: Giving attention to the physical aspects is important. Some things that can be done are: (a) make programs conveniently available; i.e., locating classes in senior citizen centers or living complexes.

If we are taking courses into factories where people work, why not take them into housing for the elderly where people are retired. Offering courses where older people live or congregate helps remove the barrier of transportation and the threat of a campus environment.

(b) make present campus accessible and identify and deal with physical features that may be barriers to accessibility.

Provide sensitive management of the campus environment; i.e., develop a more appropriate frame of reference for managing the environment to make it suitable for older students, as to parking, access, etc.

(c) provide appropriate transportation.

A bus from senior center to campus may be provided, a mini-bus from parking lot to campus, or get them reduced rates on public transportation.

5. Establish Counseling to Aid Seniors: Much needs to be done for and with the senior citizen if our programs in this area are to be successful.

Barriers to full participation by older persons exist due to an abundance of negative myths and stereotypes surrounding the aging process. Older people themselves have absorbed these negative images and too often play roles society expects of them.

The major barrier seems to be the older person himself or herself and many of these items are psychological.

For example:

Some feel that once they hit 55 or 60 years of age, their life is over.

Some feel that they are "too old" to learn and cannot learn after a certain age.

Some feel they are not on the same intellectual level and feel inferior to others.

Some are fearful of competition with younger students or feel they would be out of place in courses designed for the young.

Some fear failure in the classroom.

Some feel insecure in submitting to the authority of the teacher who frequently is younger than themselves.

Much counseling of all types must be done in the form of personal counseling, seminars or orientation sessions.

The community colleges must help older persons assess their competencies and evaluate their usefulness. One of the functions must be to ease the fears of an older adult who may be going back to the classroom after a 40 year absence.

There are a number of seminars that can be conducted to help them cope with the jitters associated with the first weeks of school; others can assist in developing study skills and how to interact with fellow students and teachers.

In addition, peer counselors should be used to encourage other older persons to come to the campus and "help them over the rough spots."

6. Utilize Seniors Wherever Possible: There are a number of ways that seniors can be utilized to bring them closer to the entire community college program.

They may be used in such situations as follows:

a. hired as student aids;
b. train volunteers;
c. to teach a course or skill in regular courses, such as retired upholsterer, to teach a class in upholstering;
d. hire seniors to teach seniors;
e. encourage the establishment of a Senior Committee or Senior Senate who can be encouraged to advise;
f. use as resource people.

We must continually recognize and use senior citizen talents.

7. Simplify Registration, Scheduling and Other Red Tape: Application forms should be simplified with larger type for easy reading and more space for answering questions; inappropriate questions, such as parents' income, obviously should be removed.

Older students may be given the opportunity to register at times other than other students to avoid "the hassle." Then, too, "the space available restriction" should be removed. It reinforces the second class status of older people, saying, in effect, that they can come but only if there is room left over after the "regulars" sign up.

In addition, flexible entry and scheduling would aid in attracting seniors.

8. See that Faculty are "In Tune": Faculty selected and assigned to the elderly on campus should be done with care: (a) faculty selected for teaching older persons should be screened for their sensitivity and empathic qualities. This is especially important for classes that deal with the subject of aging; older people may not like being told by the young what it is like to be old.

(b) some faculty feel threatened by older students and should be oriented properly before being assigned. Even though some older students have been found to work harder and outshine the young, there are some that can be garrulous or difficult with non-oriented teachers at a loss as to how to deal with them.

It is interesting to note that many, after some orientation and exposure, talk about teaching of the mature students as among their most exciting and rewarding experiences.

(c) it is important that teachers be sympathetic to the philosophy of the program and that they learn not to underestimate life experience as a worthy qualification for the classroom and change some of their classroom techniques as to tests, breaking lengthy programs into separate sequences, etc., to avoid discouraging participation of older persons.

(d) it might also be appropriate to hire special faculty or administrators; as a community service director who may be particularly attuned to the older students or an advisor to the Aged.

9. Provide Choice and Diversity in Programs: Most agree that the older people should be brought more directly into the mainstream and offered solid academic programs in all classes on campus rather than putting them out to pasture.

Some even feel that it is intellectually bad and somewhat demeaning to single out seniors in terms of classes or courses of study.

Despite this basic concept, all seem to feel that diversity and choice must be prime considerations in order to attract and keep older students.

Though the range of personalities is much wider in later life than in younger age groups, the available opportunities restrict the choices and thus, inhibit the potentialities of the very individuals institutions should be seeking to help.

Some have suggested that educators may develop curricula keyed to life experience if some older folks feel they are too old to learn or feel uncomfortable in what they feel are courses designed for the young.

Some raised the questions: If we develop special courses for women entering the world of work, should we develop courses for people leaving the world of work? If we develop special courses for people beginning married life and child rearing, should we develop special courses for older people facing widowhood or need to cope with serious prolonged illness?

Keeping the elderly in the mainstream primarily but giving them the diversity and choice of subjects like employment, retirement planning, social security or income tax in addition appears acceptable to most.

10. Trustees Should Promote Senior Programs: There are a large number of ways by which trustees can show their support of senior programs and help publicize them.

For example, if the seniors have a theatrical group on campus, have them come before the Board and publicize the event.

Trustees should also continue to sell by word of mouth with their business and social contacts the importance of the programs for seniors.

11. Trustees Should Raise Questions on All Activities to Increase Services for Elderly: Trustees dealing with budgets, programs and policies should make sure that questions are asked about other things that should be done to increase services and attractiveness to expand members of older people who might benefit from the college:

> If we actively recruit high school graduates, are we also actively recruiting persons who may not have been in high school for 40 years?
>
> If some of our publications are written to excite and intrigue 18 year olds, are some of our publications also geared to the mature man or woman seeking a creative use of leisure time?
>
> If we make sure that financial aid and scholarships are available to young people with no resources, do we exercise the same concern about financial aid for older people who are without resources?
>
> If we have special high school visitation days, do we also have special senior citizen visitation days?

These and similar questions must be asked as we attempt to define the role of the community college in the coming years.

II. WHY SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR THE ELDERLY?

Programming for older Americans should be supported and implemented in the community college campuses of America for a number of reasons: for the good of the college, the good of the older people themselves and for the greater benefit of all society.

Each of these areas are addressed briefly below:

A. Why Support Programs for the Elderly from the College's Standpoint?

1. Supports Community College Philosphy:

We all know that the community college philosophy is to serve the needs of the entire community college district and focusing our attention on the needs of the elderly certainly supports this philosophy. Since it is the community college's role to involve the whole community, it is unthinkable to not pay attention to such a growing group.

Older citizens are one of the constituencies that is served by the community college. The attitude that educational and service programs are restricted to younger citizens is educationally indefensible and contrary to the charge of the two year institution.

2. Community Colleges Have a Headstart in the Area:

Most programmers agree that community colleges have a headstart in senior citizens' programs and services. They have resources, facilities, advisory councils, public relations networks, placement centers and have studied the community and, therefore, are in an ideal position to perform this service.

3. Community College Ideally Suited to Provide Service:

The community college is an excellent institution to provide service for older persons as it is within commuting distance and/or the programs could be presented in other facilities located throughout the community college district.

Also, equipment and faculty are available without exhorbitant extra costs.

4. Opens a New Market and Assists Financially:

Anyone looking at demographics certainly understands the declining high school enrollment and the need to recruit people 60 and older. Thus, the college opens up a new market to use the educational resources and facilities and can increase the number of students credit hours and classes.

With declining enrollments of the common school levels, it may one day turn out to be that the older students will account for a good portion of state aid in a state like Illinois.

A college can start with a few programs and by "word of mouth" advertising by the participants will in time increase the attendance and programs.

All in all, it would be a financial assistance to the community college. Thus, from a self-interest perspective, older students are a source of support for the college.

5. Can Aid in College Referendum and Funding Problems:

As older citizens become involved in community college activities, it will tend to develop support throughout a new segment of the community for the resolution of funding problems.

It is rare today that a community college, or any school for that matter, can get a referendum passed. Many a time it is the group of people who have no children or ones who are among the elderly that are on a fixed income that are trying to protect their tax dollars.

If these older people see that they are getting something for their money and see that their tax dollars help to provide services for them, they are more apt to support a referendum. A community college in Illinois recently had a referendum passed 2 to 1 with a good percentage of the Senior citizens supporting it; these senior citizens represent a sizeable constituency in that district

6. Contributes to Enrichment of Others:

The older person can bring an added dimension to the educational enrichment process of the younger. It is often found that the older student is a real asset to the class. They have life experience which can be of assistance to younger students.

People of other ages benefit from association with and sharing of common experiences with older people and vice versa.

7. Value to Those Dealing with Older Persons:

A good in-service program can be of value to the entire community as it may be possible to involve government personnel who deal with older persons, administrators of senior citizens or convalescent hospitals, case workers, nurses and the like.

8. Broadens Age Range:

Bringing older people into the college broadens the age range of students and provides an excellent mix for a class and an opportunity for interchange and enlightenment among all.

9. College Foundation Can Profit:

There are many possibilities for contributions to the college's

Foundation (if you have one) by getting older persons involved. They are often in a position to make direct contributions, open doors for other philanthropic grants or bequeath monies or buildings to the college near their final days.

10. Can Serve As Recruiting Method:

Enrollment of older citizens in community college classes serves as an excellent recruiting method as they pass on their experiences to their family and friends.

11. Contributes to Good Community Relations:

Programs for the 60 and older can certainly contribute to good community relations. It is extremely important to the college for this age group to not only get involved but to understand the operation of the modern day educational institution, as well as be aware of how their tax dollar is being used.

B. Why Support Programs for the Elderly from the Standpoint of the Seniors Themselves

1. Older Persons as Taxpayers Have a Right to be Served:

Older persons have a legal right to this kind of education the same as any other group. In the State of Illinois, for example, the Community College Act indicates that such programs will be provided for all citizens who can profit from them.

As taxpayers, older persons own their rightful share of the community college and have a right to be served. Why should there be a need for establishing a priority between meeting the needs of the old and the young? It is important to consider the possibilities of a Proposition 13 in many states and possible implications.

2. Elderly Have Much to Contribute:

The accumulation of years of productive experience must not be wasted; the elderly have much to contribute. The older person adds a dimension to a class that is more than the textbook "lingo"; that is, life experience. As one mature student once said, "We keep the instructor honest."

Then, too, wisdom does not evolve spontaneously. Combination of years and experience make a good background for continued learning. Age has proved to be no disadvantage in the classroom. College professors are discovering that 60 or 70 years of life experience produce students that are open, understanding and receptive.

3. Contributes to Emotional Health:

Productive and participatory activity contributes to emotional health. Education is not as expensive as treatment and therapy. Furthermore, it is far more humane.

4. People Can Grow After 60 - Not Just Grow Old:

The individual would benefit from the classes, giving them new horizons, challenges, and would keep them active both physically and mentally, which is very important to the elderly.

These people need activity that keeps both their minds and bodies active; minds need "exercise" the same as bodies.

One is never too old to learn and the community college can certainly aid in the process. People can still grow after 60 and not simply grow old.

5. Provides Enrichment of Life Enabling Elderly to Satisfy Expressive, Contributive and Influence Needs:

The elderly can satisfy a variety of needs through programs provided for them:

a. Expressive Needs

Expressive activities that liberate the deeper levels of personality often occur in the late years. There is a large domain of under-expressed talent which could be activated to enrich one's life.

b. Contributive Needs

Older persons continue to need to give and to feel needed. Curricula which recognize this essential human factor will aid the old to serve in private and public areas.

c. Influence Needs

This addresses the importance of enabling older persons to exert greater influence in improving the circumstances of their own lives and to become agents of social change.

The content of such instruction revolves around examination of power and the political process, the decision-making structures of government, organization for advocacy, and leadership development.

The focus is on issues of vital concern to older people themselves such as health, income, housing, fiscal policy and human relations affecting the welfare of the community at large. Among the goals: to shift the emphasis, so common in current problems from "doing for" older people to helping them "do for themselves."

6. Older Folks Have "Paid Their Dues":

Since older folks have "paid their dues", so to speak, they deserve such service.

7. Enables Continued Productivity:

Enables the senior citizen an opportunity to continue to be productive in our society.

8. Aids in Mid-Career Development:

Providing programs for older Americans can aid immeasurably by not only teaching the seniors hobbies to allow for extra earnings, but by teaching new skills with the prospect of second careers and mid-career development.

9. Enables Older Amercians to be Judged for Whom They Are:

Providing an educational network for the elderly is a step in helping to build a life in which age is insignificant and in which people are judged for whom they are.

When people get an opportunity to think through ideas, they are vital and alive. All in all, these types of programs for the elderly can have a great impact on society.

10. Enables Elderly to Adjust to Major Changes in Their Life:

The reasons that college is important for young people are the same reasons the college is important for older people; namely, to enable them to adjust to major changes in their life and to prepare for their role in the next stage.

Persons in their 60's often find themselves, after involvement in a career and raising a family, facing a future which includes lessened financial resources and fewer friends because their friends are dying or moving away. They often must adjust to a new home, either in an apartment, housing for the elderly or child's house and they may have to adapt to a life without a spouse to whom they have been married for many years.

All these changes are sometimes accompanied by moves to completely new communities. College offers an opportunity to chart another course and a more satisfying immediate future. Whether the person becomes beguiled with learning for its own sake or uses it as a tool to expand his personal horizons in practical ways, he can benefit from the college experience and society can benefit from his involvement.

College then is a period in which, through participation, classes and seminars and social activities and study, the person builds a general knowlege of the world as it exists for him at that time and develops his own manner of coping with the world in which he finds himself financially, socially and intellectually.

11. Provides Outlet for Their Free Time:

As citizens move into the senior citizen realm or into retirement, more free time often becomes available and many of these folks have a deep desire for self-development or development of new skills. The community college can provide an outlet for this free time.

12. Provides Social Contacts:

Designed programs can provide senior citizens a chance to meet their peers on a social basis which is often lacking for some and most vital as their peers "thin out".

13. Offers an Opportunity to Build a "Family":

We live in a society in which the "nuclear family" which includes two parents and children is a fact for only 15 percent of the population.

We have millions of single parent households, single people living alone and various other living combinations unsanctioned by religion or tradition.

The extended nuclear family of the recent past which might have included parents, children, aunts, uncles, grandparents and possibly some poor relation is as dead as the dinosaur.

Older people can no longer count on a stable, nuclear family which nurtured them when they were young to sustain them in old age. They have no one to turn to for advice and support or even as a mirror to their own existence. College offers an opportunity to build a "family" for many people.

As they deal with the many changes which old age brings, people find an opportunity in college to develop friendships, skills, attitudes and relationships which enable them to cope with the changed circumstances in their lives.

C. Why Support Programs for the Elderly from the Standpoint of the Economy and Society in General

1. Laws Address the Elderly:

Our Congress and State Legislatures are more and more addressing bills that apply to and affect the elderly and it behooves each of us as trustees to become aware of them and review these carefully.

Allow me to cite just two (2) examples:

"Mondale Bill on Lifelong Learning": Never before has the law recognized as it does now that the elderly constitute a distinct group along with the more conventionally recognized groups, for whom lifelong learning is important.

The Lifelong Learning Act is conceived in effect with their continuing development as human beings; it acknowledges that older people cannot live by bread alone.

Among its specific provisions, the law mandates an assessment of the educational needs and goals of older and retired persons; it calls for identification of existing barriers to lifelong learning and an evaluation of programs designed to eliminate them; and it calls for review of the organization and funding for training and education of the elderly on retirement.

This bill was signed into law on October 12, 1976. It is now Title I Part B of the Education Amendments of 1976 (Public Law 94 - 482).

Age Discrimination Act of 1975: With mandatory retirement reaching into the seventh decade or as long as you wish in many industries, it is important that we keep everyone's mind functioning. This is less traumatic on society and on one's family. Then, too, the revisions to this law makes unlawful any unreasonable age discrimination in programs or activites receiving federal funds.

This law became effective January 1979 and is expected to have a major impact on campuses. Noncompliance will run the risk of law suits. According to the National Association of College and University Business Officers, it will affect "college and university admissions, housing, financial assistance, student activities, academic programs, athletics, student employment and benefits."

2. We Are a Nation of Aging People:

All census figures indicate a growing percentage of older citizens which would tend to indicate that further growth for educational institutions will require programs that will attract the older age group. Then, too, to look at the demographics will soon tell us

that we are becoming a nation of aging people; therefore, as trustees we should gear ourselves to dealing with this change.

There will be an increasing number of persons between the ages of 55 and 65 who will comprise a national constituency for late-in-life education. At present, there are almost 20 million people in the 55 to 65 age bracket. That group added to the number of those who are already 65 and over, comprise a total of more than 42 million Americans.

Yes, we are a nation of aging people; nearly 23 million are 65 and older - over 10 percent of the population.

3. The Old Not as Old as They Used To Be:

This may appear to be a cliche but upon examination, I am sure there is a great deal of truth to it. People are living longer, are healthier and stay active longer which makes the older person a natural for our community college programs.

4. Learning Capacities Do Not Diminish With Age:

Scientific studies indicate, contrary to popular opinion, that learning capacities do not diminish with age. Longitutional studies show that intellectual abilities among healthy people grow greater through the years - not less.

5. Changing Society Calls for Educational Needs of Elderly:

With the growing complexity and changing nature of society, there is more need for senior citizens to continue their education throughout their lifetime.

With more:

Leisure Time;
Citizens at retirement age;
Methods of communication and
Better transportation available to citizens.

there are more opportunities for senior adults to take advantage of continuing educational programs.

6. Access to Education a Must for Early Retirees:

With the continuing trend toward early retirement, a person who retires in the early 50's has 20 to 25 years of life expectancy.

Is it reasonable to expect such a person to be literally retired for even 20 years? It is imperative that this segment of the population gain more equitable access to education and work opportunities.

7. Many Aged Forced to Work Need Retraining:

With inflation as it is, many in this age group are still being forced to work and find it very difficult to continue with physically taxing jobs. They must be redirected, retrained and

renewed. This is the job of the community college.

8. Contributes to Quality of Life:

Providing programs for older Americans will help us contribute to the quality of life, for after all, are we not interested in improving the quality of life for society at large and not one segment? It all boils down to the recognition of human dignity.

9. Wealth of the Nation Controlled by Older People:

From an economic standpoint, it makes sense to provide programs for the elderly for the wealth of the nation is controlled by older people. People contribute to and pay for that which relates meaningfully to them.

III. SUMMARY

In short, an attempt has been made to briefly address some of the ways Board Members can support older people programs and the benefits that can be realized from implementation of such programs - from the standpoint of the community college, the elderly themselves and society in general.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

JUL 20 1979

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